



General Assembly

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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2007 to March 2008

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 62/119 of 17 December 2007, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories, and to that end, requested the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat to empower the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions to disseminate material to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of that resolution, the Assembly also requested the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to update web-based information on the assistance programmes available to those Territories, and requested the Department, together with the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, to take measures through all the media available, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2007 to March 2008.

2. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information covered decolonization issues extensively through press releases in both print and online formats, through news stories in the official languages, in all areas of its news outputs on the United Nations website, and through radio and various publications. The coverage focused on the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

3. The Department, working closely with the Department of Political Affairs, deployed an Information Officer from Australia to join the United Nations team to



observe the referendum on self-government in free association with New Zealand in Tokelau in October 2007. The Information Officer sent daily updates on the progress of the referendum to Headquarters, which were then disseminated to the media and the general public through media briefings and the United Nations website. The referendum was widely publicized by the international newswires, including the Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France-Presse, and the BBC, as well as by the regional media. The Information Officer also sent a number of photos taken during the referendum to Headquarters. Some of the photos were featured on the United Nations News Centre website as well as on iSeck, the Secretariat's internal website. The photos are archived in the Photo Library.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

4. The Department issued a total of 45 press releases (25 in English and 20 in French) on decolonization during the reporting period, covering meetings, statements and hearings of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Four press releases were issued on the Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: priorities for action, held in Saint George's, Grenada, from 22 to 24 May 2007.

5. The topic of decolonization, including the role of the Trusteeship Council and of the Special Committee, was regularly included in the Department's guided tour of United Nations Headquarters. The set of maps on decolonization outside the Security Council Chamber assisted the guides in explaining to the visitors the historical process of decolonization as well as the locations of the current Non-Self-Governing Territories. In 2007, approximately 444,000 visitors took the guided tour.

6. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit continued to respond to queries from the public concerning decolonization. The Group Programmes and Community Liaison Unit arranged briefings for visiting groups on the work of the United Nations, including the role the United Nations played in the decolonization process and how decolonization in turn impacted the work of the United Nations.

III. United Nations Television and Radio

7. United Nations Television covered open meetings of the Security Council and other intergovernmental bodies, and also provided coverage of stakeouts and press conferences relating to Western Sahara. The TV Production Section produced one story related to decolonization in the series 21st Century and UN in Action, focusing on reuniting family members who had been separated by the situation in Western Sahara.

8. United Nations Radio produced material on different dimensions of decolonization in its daily and weekly news and magazine programmes, in both official and non-official languages, for regional and worldwide dissemination.

9. The English Language Unit provided daily coverage of the three-day Caribbean Regional Seminar on decolonization, held in Grenada in May 2007, and conducted interviews with participants and invited experts. It also featured the referendum in Tokelau. The Spanish Language Unit covered the discussion of the Special Committee regarding the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Puerto Rico, Western Sahara and related stories. The French and Portuguese Language Units covered the negotiations between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro and Morocco held at Manhasset, New York, and provided regular updates on this issue. In September, the Chinese Language Unit conducted an interview with Major General Zhao Jingmin, the newly appointed Force Commander for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Kiswahili Language Unit produced six stories about the situation in Western Sahara, focusing on different dimensions, including developments in the Mission and funding to assist refugees living in camps in Tindouf, Algeria.

IV. Internet

10. The referendum in Tokelau was among developments and issues related to decolonization that were given prominent coverage by the United Nations News Centre portal and the associated United Nations News Service. News stories covering those developments were also distributed around the world through the site's e-mail news alerts service, which has over 50,000 subscribers in English and French. Many of those news articles, including the one covering the Secretary-General's address to a meeting of the Special Committee in Grenada in May 2007, were picked up by various websites, among them such media outlets as Caribbean Net News and MercoPress.

V. Publications

11. The *Yearbook of the United Nations 2005*, published in March 2008, gave comprehensive coverage to the work of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It also included general decolonization issues and the situation of individual Non-Self-Governing Territories.

VI. United Nations information centres and services

12. During the reporting period, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva issued press releases by human rights experts on the issue of decolonization and produced summaries of meetings where the subject had been discussed, in particular in the context of country reviews undertaken by the human rights treaty bodies, during meetings of the Human Rights Council, and at a meeting of the Economic and Social Council dedicated to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV)) by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations on 26 July 2007. At that meeting the Council

adopted resolution 2007/25 on the subject. The topic of decolonization, including the role of the Trusteeship Council, was regularly included in the Service's guided tour of the Palais des Nations. In 2007, close to 94,000 visitors took the guided tour.

13. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna also continued to disseminate information on Non-Self-Governing Territories to interested non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations as well as university institutes in Austria and other countries that are covered by the Service. The United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels was particularly active on the issue of Western Sahara. It regularly sends out the reports of the Secretary-General on the issue to relevant European Union authorities and media. The Centre's Desk Officer gave a presentation on the history of the conflict at a hearing of the European Parliament on Western Sahara on 20 March 2008.

14. The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Canberra disseminated information on decolonization to media in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. The Centre was very active in supporting the United Nations observer team to Tokelau and publicizing the referendum. It identified an appropriate information officer for deployment to Tokelau and made all the travel arrangements for her mission. Headquarters-UNIC cooperation was key to the successful deployment. The United Nations Information Centre in Port of Spain highlighted the Secretary-General's message to the Caribbean Regional Seminar on decolonization in its press release, which is available on its website.